

Duxburys' Juliana Hatfield Plays to Her Own Tune

By DAVE FLETCHER

Singer-songwriter and Duxbury native Juliana Hatfield is atypically happy to be out of the public limelight. While Hatfield's national popularity during the mid-90s was appreciated, she says, platinum records are not what her music strives for.



Hatfield

"I'm pretty glad about being out of the public eye. Commercial success is really stressful... lots of unpleasanties," says Hatfield, 35, who currently lives in Cambridge.

Hatfield remembers a more innocent time only about ten years ago when musicians were not mere corporate commodities.

"It's harder now for people starting out to break into the business," she claims. "It's all about selling, selling, selling. The music industry is so horrifying today. If you don't sell a lot of records it's hard to be taken seriously."

Hatfield's conscious rejection of the mainstream was born out of her personal need for uninhibited artistic expression.

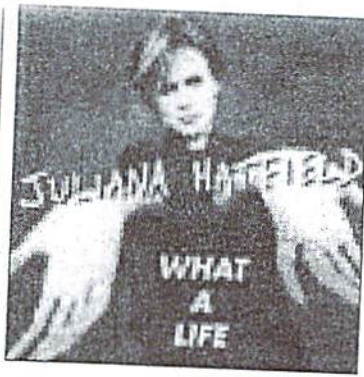
"I want freedom and independence to do music the way I want to do it," she says. "I'm doing this for reasons that have nothing to do with commercial success."

Songwriting for Hatfield is about realizing an inner desire to play the guitar and sing heartfelt melodies. Her passion was so strong even as a teenager as she transferred from Boston University after one semester to Berklee College of Performing Arts in Boston "solely to find people to play in a band with."

Her shy modesty and hushed voice may make it hard for some people to believe she is a powerful stage presence. But her deeply personal songs, highlighted album by album in her recent release, "Gold Stars 1992-2002: The Juliana Hatfield Collection", give off an energy she feels can only come out through music.

"Being shy, it's easier to be on stage sometimes," she says. "A lot of people who perform are either shy or outgoing and need a lot of attention. Performing fulfills a need for human interaction."

Hatfield's live performances are just as much for her as they are for the audience. Her entrance into the mainstream with the singles "My Sister" and "Spin the Bottle" hurt the comfort level she felt onstage be-



fore becoming so well known.

"I didn't want to be ungrateful to attention, but it was also confusing because I felt I didn't deserve the attention anymore then than I ever have," said Hatfield, whose musical performances on the shows "My So-Called Life" and "Beavis and Butthead" made her famous.

"Part of the reason I got a lot of attention in the early 90s was because people started noticing girls," Hatfield claims. "The 'Women in Rock' label I always thought was sort of demeaning. Girls weren't necessarily signed because of merit or talent...women are treated like novelty acts."

With her fame came a new demand for Hatfield in the media, where she began to feel commodified. "I would be photographed for magazines," she says. "Certain things they would want me to wear... I just had to put my foot down and say, 'No, I'm not gonna wear a leather boustierre with a push-up bra.'"

Hatfield decided that the trade off for commercial success was not worth forfeiting her values morally. She real-

ized that she could not conform to the mainstream like other corporately manufactured megastars of today such as Britney Spears and N'SYNC.

"I've never felt pressure to mold songs into what's popular," Hatfield states. "Maybe that's why I haven't been as much of a commercial success."

For instance, about five years ago Hatfield recorded an album called "God's Foot", which she felt was one of her finest musical creations. However, her record company at the time, Atlantic Records, chose not to release the album. The upset Hatfield was relieved from her contract with Atlantic after undergoing a weeklong hunger strike to convince the company to let her go. She's now signed to Rounder Records, a small Cambridge-based label.

As Hatfield puts it, "I sort of tried to play the game for a while in the mid-90s, but I was disqualified because I wouldn't smile for the camera."

Her advice to young, upcoming musicians who don't want to become engulfed in the corporate mainstream is simple. "You don't have to say yes to everything everybody tells you to do," she urges.

Hatfield herself has been faithfully following this mantra for years.

(Dave Fletcher is a Marshfield resident and junior at Boston University. This article was originally written for his journalism class.)